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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7361  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2006

#### In Today's Papers

Gul Visits Lebanon to Discuss International Force Deployment  
All papers: Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul told the Turkish press after returning home from Lebanon on Wednesday that the international force to be deployed in the south of the country will not deal with Hezbollah or work to disarm Hezbollah. On his day trip to Lebanon, Gul met with Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, Parliament Speaker Nabih Barri and Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh, and visited the Hezbollah-stronghold Dahia region which was incessantly bombed by Israeli forces during the war. Gul listed as Turkish conditions for joining the peacekeeping force that Turkish troops will not carry out combat duties, and that the force will not be asked to disarm Hezbollah but only perform logistical and humanitarian tasks.

Zaman says Siniora has stated that all parties in Lebanon, including Hezbollah, want Turkish participation in the international force. Gul said Turkey strongly backed the seven-stage peace plan proposed by Siniora. Gul noted Turkey's satisfaction with United Nations resolution no. 1701 calling for an end to hostilities in the region.

Zaman says if today's UN meeting expected to set the rules of engagement in Lebanon meets Turkish expectations, the government might call an extraordinary parliament meeting to discuss the issue.

Vatan says Ankara's decision would be shaped at a National Security Council (MGK) meeting to be held August 21. Military and diplomatic officials told the papers Turkish influence in the region would decline if Ankara refuses to send troops to Lebanon. Hurriyet reports Ankara would make a decision "after Gul's meetings in Israel on Sunday." Cumhuriyet claims the Turkish General Staff (TGS) has cautioned the AK Party government against rush in sending troops, citing concerns of the military such as Turkey should first of all wait for action from Islamic countries which have remained "impartial" in the conflict, that UN has not yet announced the conditions of the ceasefire truce, and that the prospective force's

mission description and location have not been clarified. Turkish commanders warned in Cumhuriyet that Lebanon was not Kosovo, a region which had a basis for success.

AKP Group deputy chairman Faruk Celik said Turkey would deploy peacekeeping troops to Lebanon just as it had done in Bosnia and Kosovo. Turkey-Lebanon Parliamentary Friendship Group chief, AKP MP Medeni Yilmaz, said his group would travel to Lebanon soon to assess civilian needs in the war-torn country.

Sami Kohen commented in mainstream Milliyet that it remained to be seen whether Hezbollah agrees to pull back all its militants and weapons from the region: "Lebanon is not going to force Hezbollah to disarm, so, how will Hezbollah disarmament be realized? Just as Turkish Foreign Minister Gul did, all the leaders from the countries possibly sending troops to Lebanon asked the government of Lebanon for some guarantees and explanations. The UN is reluctant to determine the peacekeeping force's duties in a second resolution. Since, no one can give answers to the questions about the duties of the peacekeeping force, the ambiguity among the countries will continue."

Turkey to Appoint a "PKK Coordinator"

Sabah, Vatan, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak: Turkey is preparing to appoint a special coordinator, either a diplomat or a member of the military, for the struggle against the PKK after a US coordinator is named. The Turkish coordinator will work closely with the coordinator to be appointed by the United States. Iraq will also appoint its own coordinator under the framework of the three-party mechanism established among US, Turkey, and Iraq. Vatan notes that the US decision sparked speculation that the coordinator would act as an intermediary between Ankara and the PKK.

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Fatih Altayli claims in the mass appeal Sabah that the PKK coordinators "have no meaning for Turkey" and should be seen as a "US tactic to calm Turkey down:" "According to Turkish intelligence and security, there is no need for this group of coordinators. If the problem is generating from the flow of information, then, there is no such problem because Turkish intelligence always shares information on the PKK with the US and the Iraqi Administration through the Turkish General Staff or National Intelligence Service. So, if there is no problem here, what will the duties of these coordinators be? If the American coordinator meets with the PKK to serve as an intermediary between Turkey and the PKK, then Turkey might face unexpected "fait accompli" decisions made on the PKK. Turkish security units believe that this coordinator initiative will bring Turkey enormous problems, therefore, they expect the Turkish government to reject this proposal."

Iran Kicks Off Extensive Operation against the PKK

Sabah and Cumhuriyet report that Iranian troops have launched an extensive military operation against PKK militants holed up in Mount Kandil, in retaliation against the killing of 10 Iranian soldiers in a PKK landmine attack on Tuesday. The Iranian ground troops' advance into northern Iraq continues despite sporadic clashes while Iranian artillery continued shelling certain areas on the skirts of Mount Kandil.

Seventh Anniversary of August 17 Earthquake

All papers report seven years after the August 17 earthquake the Turkish government is still under the rubble. Homeless survivors still live in dire conditions in prefabricated houses. Plans to reinforce buildings have not been carried out and citizens are advised that everyone should strengthen their own houses. The August 17, 1999 earthquake claimed some 18,000 lives, wounding another 44,000. Non-official estimates put the death toll at around 50,000.

TV Highlights  
NTV, 8.00 A.M.  
Domestic News

- The Turkish Red Crescent sent to Lebanon a third convoy of trucks

carrying humanitarian aid.

- Coalition government partners in Turkish Cyprus have come to the verge of split when the junior partner Serdar Denktas turned down reforms proposed by his partner CTP.
- Turkish Health Ministry announced that results of a survey show the boom in cancer rates in the Black Sea region were not related to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1993.
- Civil servants and the Turkish government in collective bargaining failed on Wednesday to agree on the date pay hikes will take effect.
- Turkey's state-owned Ziraat Bank to open a branch in Saudi Arabia as part of a broader cooperation program between the two countries.

#### International News

- The Lebanese cabinet discussed yesterday a plan to deploy Lebanese military south of Litani River as of Thursday.
- The Armenian lobby in the US said in a letter to President Bush that Turkish military presence in Lebanon would harm US interests and impede lasting regional peace.
- The Palestinian ruling Hamas party and President Abbas have agreed to begin talks on forming a national unity government.

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- The British daily Independent said the EU is mulling a transfer of authority over the Turkish Cypriot ports to the United Nations in a move to resolve a standoff between the EU and Turkey.

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